



KEVIN O'NEILL / STAFF ARTIST

Foolin' Around

Farm-grown noodles and oodles of fun

All signs point to another banner year for the Swiss spaghetti crop. The last time they had a harvest this big was in 1957 when a combination of a mild winter and eradication of the spaghetti weevil resulted in record yields of farm-fresh spaghetti, rotini, linguini and other noodles.

When the BBC reported on the record harvest back in 1957, it was inundated with calls from viewers wanting to know how they could grow their own spaghetti trees. Had any of those viewers bothered to check the calendar they might have noticed the date was April 1, which is the only day of the year when you can grow spaghetti.

This is one of the top 100 April Fools' Day hoaxes of all time listed on museumofhoaxes.com, a website devoted to trickery. Some of the other famous hoaxes include Taco Bell announcing in 1996 that it had bought the Liberty Bell and was renaming it the Taco Liberty Bell. Outraged taxpayers were not soothed by White House press secretary Mike McCurry's tongue-in-cheek statement that another national monument had been sold and would be known henceforth as the Ford Lincoln Mercury Memorial.

In 1998, Burger King announced the introduction of the left-handed Whopper. Not only did thousands of presumably left-handed customers request it, but many also requested the original right-handed version.

Pull some pranks

If you're trying to come up with some good gags to pull this April Fools' Day, help is just a few clicks away. There are many websites with examples and instructions for planning the perfect prank. For fun and harmless practical jokes, visit the site AprilFoolZone.com. Here's a sample of some featured gags:

- **Set a bottle of nailpolish** sideways with the lid off on a sheet of waxpaper. When the polish dries completely put the bottle and dried spill on the carpet or a stack of important papers.
- **Tape a co-worker's phone hook** down so it keeps ringing when he or she picks up the handset.
- **Glue a quarter to the ground** in a public place and watch as people attempt to pick it up.

That's not funny

The list of the Top 10 Worst April Fools' Day Hoaxes proves that dictatorships should stick to repressing their people and not try to be funny. On April 1, of 1998 and 2000, Saddam Hussein's son Uday announced that the punishing sanctions against Iraq had been lifted. Just kidding! The suffering Iraqis must have found that hilarious. The rest of the list has pranks that range from profoundly stupid to downright cruel.

April Fools' jokes are not the only pranks featured on the site, since historically, some pranksters are not bound by the calendar. There's a hoax Hall of Fame featuring the Top 10 College Pranks of all time and the Top 20 Satirical Candidates. The

Hoax Archives has categories ranging from advertising and animals to technology and television.

The site has several tests you can take to see how good you are at spotting hoaxes. There are photo tests featuring unusual or amazing images that may or may not have been altered. And there are gullibility tests featuring unusual or amazing "facts" that you have to judge as either true or false.

Even the advertising on the site is gag related. Fake lottery tickets, fart machines and fake parking tickets are just some of the high-brow merchandise available.

The site has a blog that requires registration in order to participate. Members can comment on featured hoaxes or submit their own. Dubious stories are examined in order to determine their authenticity. There is also a link to Twitter.

The design of the site could use some work. Clicking on a link will often take you to a page that looks like it belongs on a completely different site. It was often difficult to navigate back to a section I had been viewing because the navigation controls change from page to page.

The Museum of Hoaxes website is a good place to get inspiration as the world's silliest unofficial holiday approaches. There are lots of interesting reads and some really funny stuff there. It's nice to see that there are people all around the world, and throughout history, who don't take life too seriously.

KEVIN O'NEILL is a graphic artist for The Times-Tribune. Contact him at koneill@timeshamrock.com with links to your favorite websites.



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